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Rowan

Rowan Coat of Arms

General information

Status

Imperial duchy
Administrative unit within the Nilfgaardian Republic (formerly}
Mercantile republic (formerly)
Independent realm (formerly)

Ruler

Rowani Duke/Duchess

Societal information

Official Language

Nilfgaardian Language
Rowani (formerly)

Demonym

Rowani/Rowanian

Religion

Great Sun
Mithrea (formerly)

Rowan is a duchy within the Nilfgaardian Empire, known above all for its cultivation of mandrake. It was one of the very first territories to be conquered by Nilfgaard—at a time when the empire was still a republic.

In earlier centuries, Rowan stood first as a compact absolute monarchy and later as a small but powerful merchant republic, strong enough at its height to rival the Nilfgaardian senatorial republic itself. The duchy's capital is Darn Rowan *(Nilfgaardian: Fortress of Rowan*), formerly known by its original name Chaarowain *(Rowani: City of the Linear River).*

History

Pre-Human Times

Unlike many other regions of the Old Continent, Rowan was never home to a permanent non-human population prior to the First Conjunction. The reasons remain uncertain, for the land's valleys and hills would have seemed ideal for leimoniads and other races of the nymphic classification, such as dryads and naiads.

The strongest traces of non-human presence are temporary mining colonies of gnomes and dwarves along the borderlands with Ymlac. No lasting settlements were ever established, and archaeological evidence suggests these communities were short-lived outposts rather than true towns.

The most widely accepted theory among scholars is that Rowan's climate discouraged permanent habitation. Summers are oppressively hot, while winters are bitterly cold—conditions most non-human races found unfavorable. Instead, they chose regions with milder seasonal contrasts, leaving Rowan largely untouched until the arrival of humans in the 230s Before the Resurrection, during the time of the First Conjunction of the Spheres.

The Beginning of Inhabited Rowan

The first known human inhabitants of Rowan were the nyglassos (*Rowani: "The Greens"*), regarded as the ancestors of the pre-conquest Rowani people.

They are considered a distinct ethnic group of uncertain origin. Some scholars suggest they may have been an offshoot of the Markee of Metinna, dating back to the period when the Markee still lived in Ebbing before their northward migration. Archaeological remains —both human and equine (since horses are not native to Rowan's environment)—appear to support this theory, as they align chronologically with the Markee exodus from Ebbing.

The prevailing theory, however, is that the nyglassos were not Markee in the strict sense, but rather a later hybrid group. According to this view, a faction of "left behind" or exiled Markee, due to their nomadic nature, migrated southward in the opposite direction of their kin. Along their journey, they encountered local human groups in the borderlands between present-day Ymlac and Rowan. Threatened by the beasts and strange beings that came with the Conjunction, the two peoples are thought to have joined forces and intermingled, eventually giving rise to the distinct Rowani ethnicity.

This process may also explain the emergence of Rowan's absolute monarchy in later centuries. It is believed to have evolved from a strong tribal chieftainship, established by the leader who guided the people into safer lands and organized the first settled communities once they put down roots.

The Consolidation of the Kingdom of Rowan (130s B.R. — 400s A.R.)

Archaeological evidence, combined with folkloric traditions preserved in Rowan, suggests that once the nyglassos settled in the region, they first established scattered, semi-independent villages. These communities operated largely on their own but would occasionally convene to seek counsel from a prominent tribal leader who acted as mediator in disputes.

As conflicts between settlements grew more frequent—whether over land, resources, or the threats brought by the Conjunction—this figure's authority expanded. Over time, the role of mediator evolved into one of centralized power, culminating in the emergence of Rowan's absolute monarchy. Most historians place this transformation in the 5th century A.R., when the disparate communities were unified under a single sovereign.

This development may also explain the dynastic surname later borne by Rowan's monarchs: **Dysainsh**. Linguists trace the name to the Rowani word **Inshleyder** (*"intervener" or "installer"*), likely a title first given to the early chieftain who consolidated power and institutionalized kingship in Rowan.

Rise and Golden Age of the Kingdom of Rowan (500s A.R – 900s A.R)

The 6th to 10th centuries marked the rise and golden age of Rowan's monarchy. During this era, the realm transformed into a small but notable power in its own right, largely thanks to the cultivation of mandrake. The later discovery of its alchemical properties turned the plant into Rowan's chief export, bringing immense wealth to the kingdom. For over four centuries, Rowan stood as the sole producer of mandrake along the western coast of the Old Continent, securing a monopoly that elevated its influence.

By the 830s, however, decline began to set in. The monarchy weakened as the chiarns steadily rose in power. Seeking to expand their wealth beyond the crown's control, they sold mandrake seeds abroad, undermining Rowan's monopoly and leading to the spread of cultivation in Vicovaro, Ymlac, and eventually, indirectly, even in the North. Land ownership further allowed the chiarns to invest in more lucrative enterprises. Chief among these was the nascent tourism industry, which by this time had begun to attract visitors from Ymlac, Vicovaro, and Nilfgaard.

This period also saw Rowan's monarchy forge diplomatic ties with other royal courts, including pre-republican Nilfgaard, Ymlac, and even distant Etolia. Many consort rulers of the era were of foreign origin, their marriages carefully arranged as a means of securing peace and avoiding invasions, given the small size of the country.

The Fall of the Monarchy and the Rise of the Chiarni Republic (900s–1000s A.R.)

The collapse of Rowan's mandrake monopoly eventually triggered a profound economic crisis. Overreliance on a single crop, combined with the monarchy's lack of long-term vision, left the kingdom dangerously exposed. Chroniclers assign indirect blame to the chiarns, whose decision to sell mandrake seeds abroad undermined Rowan's exclusivity, and direct blame to the crown, which by this time was consumed by self-interest and lavish excess.

As revenues dwindled, the monarchy sought to fund its extravagance through escalating taxation. These measures struck hardest at the chiarns, whose vast estates and commercial enterprises bore the greatest burden. Resentment deepened, and the chiarns redirected their wealth and influence toward revolution.

By mobilizing the peasant laborers under their control, the chiarns raised paramilitary militias that eventually overthrew the monarchy. The crown was abolished, and in its place the victorious chiarn families proclaimed the Chiarni Republic of Rowan, governed by a council composed of their own ranks.

For nearly a century, the republic prospered as a powerful mercantile state. Its wealth no longer rested primarily on production, but on the tariffs and tolls imposed on foreign merchants traversing its strategically situated lands. In this period, Rowan's influence reached heights surpassing those of its monarchical past, with its coffers swollen by trade.

Yet the prosperity of the Chiarni Republic also bred the very excesses its founders had once denounced. The unchecked greed of the ruling chiarns, coupled with the republic's rising power, drew the attention—and eventually the hostility—of the senatorial Republic of Nilfgaard. To Nilfgaard's patricians, the small merchant republic appeared not only as an economic rival but also as a dangerous mirror of what unchecked merchant dominance might mean within their own state.

The Tariff War and the Fall of the Chiarni Republic (11th century A.R.)

By the 11th century, the ambitions of the Chiarni Republic had grown unchecked. No longer content with its mercantile wealth, the republic turned to territorial expansion, launching a campaign against its neighbor Ymlac—still independent at the time. The Chiarni waged this war with a mixed host: locally raised forces bolstered by as many mercenaries as their overflowing coffers could hire. Even companies from the distant taifas of Barsa were enlisted, if the stories are to be believed.

What the Chiarni failed to anticipate was Nilfgaard's response. The senatorial republic, wary of Rowan's increasing power, seized the opportunity to act. Instead of confronting Rowan directly, the senate imposed a devastating tariff war. Every merchant caravan, every company of mercenaries, and even Rowani soldiers themselves were forced to pay duties whenever they passed through Nilfgaardian lands.

The economic consequences were immediate. Rowan's treasury, drained by both the war effort and the new tariffs, rapidly emptied. Deprived of payment, the mercenaries and soldiers who had once served the republic turned against their employers. Nilfgaard's diplomats promised rich rewards if they abandoned the Chiarni cause, ceased the war against Ymlac, and delivered Rowan into Nilfgaardian hands.

The bargain was accepted. On their return from the Ymlac front, these same troops marched on Rowan's capital. The city was sacked and burned, its remnants swept away in fire and ruin. Upon its ashes rose Darn Rowan (*"Fortress of Rowan"*), refounded as the seat of Nilfgaardian authority.

Rowan was reorganized as a swyg (Middle Nilfgaardian: "bubble"), a special administrative unit rather than a vassal state. This status preserved its lucrative role as a crossroads of trade but stripped it of independence. Meanwhile, Ymlac, weakened by its conflict with Rowan, was soon after subjected to a Nilfgaardian campaign as well, ensuring that the southern republic secured its sphere of influence without major threats nearby.

The Swyg Period (1000s – 1135 A.R.)

During Rowan's time as a swyg, daily life continued much as it had before. The primary change was political: though the chiarns still exercised authority, their power was now subordinated to the **swyge**, the Nilfgaardian administrator who governed Rowan in practice as a protectorate.

This was the era in which Rowan underwent its most profound process of Nilfgaardianization. The transformation unfolded in stages. First came the legal reforms (1000–1050 A.R.), when Nilfgaardian law gradually replaced local codes. Next arrived the missionaries of the Great Sun (1050–1065 A.R.), whose efforts swiftly reshaped the duchy's religious landscape. By the end of the century, cultural assimilation had begun to take root, weaving Nilfgaardian customs into everyday Rowani life.

Linguistic and even ethnic Nilfgaardianization, however, progressed more slowly. This deeper transformation was driven by both policy and settlement: Nilfgaardian colonists arrived, intermarried with locals, and introduced their language and traditions.

By the mid-13th century A.R., at least two out of every three Rowani could trace some measure of Nilfgaardian ancestry, a testament to how thoroughly Rowan had been absorbed into the imperial sphere.

From Swyg to Duchy (1135 A.R.)

With the abolition of the senate and the rise of Torres var Emreis, the founder of the Nilfgaardian Empire, Rowan's status shifted once more. Through a series of sweeping edicts, Torres sought to consolidate his new authority and eliminate potential threats from within.

Rowan, long privileged as a swyg, was viewed with suspicion. Torres feared that the liberties granted to the chiarns might embolden them to reclaim their former influence and, like termites, weaken the young empire from the inside. To forestall such a possibility, he revoked Rowan's status as a special administrative unit and restructured it as a duchy. Its dukes would henceforth be appointed directly from the imperial capital, loyal servants of the throne rather than local elites.

For the common people of Rowan, daily life changed little under this reform. But for the chiarns, it marked the beginning of their definitive decline. Their influence, steadily eroded over the previous centuries, was now decisively broken, ending nearly four hundred years of intermittent power.

The First Northern War (1263 A.R.)

Unlike many other Nilfgaardian territories, Rowan only took part in the First Northern War. During the subsequent conflicts, the duchy was struck by waves of epidemics, forcing it to keep its levies at home to suppress potential unrest.

In 1263, however, Rowan contributed both mages and cavalry to Nilfgaard's campaign. A small contingent of light horsemen was incorporated into the so-called Cefnforol Division, named for their pale blue livery. More notable still was the group of Rowanite mages, commanded by the Lower Albanian sorceress Isbel aep Muir Moss. Among them were Edagg var Còrado, Ñeg aep Rizardo, Austan var Qùellini, and Llydæ aep Màesra—all of whom fell at the Battle of Sodden Hill.

The deaths of her comrades, coupled with the preceding Slaughter of Cintra, drove Isbel to abandon the Nilfgaardian cause. With caused to her being in the empire branded a traitor, to be hunted around the world by the Streicwyr (the Nilfgaardian equivalent of the Nordling Praetorship), and to have a bounty placed upon her head. The fallen mages, meanwhile, were exalted as heroes and martyrs of the empire. In Darn Rowan, a monument was erected in their honor—said, with some pride by the Rowanites, to surpass even the memorial raised to the Nordling mages at Sodden.

Geography

Rowan is a landlocked territory, with no access to the sea. The closest thing to an inland sea is Lough Airh (*Rowani: Golden Lake)*, formed by one of the great diversions of the Row Awin (*Rowani: Line River*). This river, the lifeblood of the duchy, traverses Rowan from the highlands before splitting into four branches, only to rejoin further downstream, leaving behind fertile valleys and wetlands. The very name of the country—Rowan—is believed to be a linguistic corruption of Row Awin (Row Awin → Rowawin → Rowain → Rowan).

The landscape is predominantly hilly, carved into valleys where most of Rowan's cities, towns, and villages are located. These valleys provide shelter from harsh winter winds and concentrate both settlement and agriculture. Evergreen yew forests dominate the higher elevations, while the lower valleys are marked by farmland, orchards, and small vineyards.

Rowan's highest point is Turcaid Slieau (Rowani: Light Blue Mountain), rising to approximately 800 meters. From its slopes emerges the Row Awin, whose steady flow has shaped both the geography and the culture of the duchy, serving as the backbone of transport, trade, and agriculture throughout its history.

Rowan borders the Tir Tochair mountains to the east, which separate the duchy from the hostile Korath desert. To the north, it shares a frontier with the duchy of Ymlac; crossing one of Ymlac's rivers, tributaries of the Alba, one can eventually reach Vicovaro. To the west, Rowan meets the lands of Lower Alba—the imperial heartland itself.

Climate

Rowan's inland position gives it a sharply contrasting climate: hot summers and severe winters. This severity is not due to latitude alone, but to a distinct atmospheric phenomenon unique to the region.

During the colder months, cold southern cloud fronts travel northward until they encounter the mountain range that borders Rowan to the north. Unable to pass through, the clouds accumulate—layer upon layer—until they blanket the duchy entirely. It is this cloud congestion that brings Rowan its characteristic winters.

Locals traditionally divide the winter into three phases, each defined by the density of the clouds:

- Rains (first buildup), when the earliest formations release steady downpours.
- Hail (mid-level accumulation), when pressure increases and precipitation hardens into ice pellets.
- Snow (maximum accumulation), when the congestion reaches its peak, releasing heavy snowfall across valleys and hills.

This cycle persists until southern winds—weaker but steady—eventually push the blocked clouds over the mountains. Their dispersal marks the beginning of spring, as the skies gradually clear and the snow thaws.

The Row Awin river typically freezes during this time, halting transport and trade, while Lough Airh alone remains unfrozen thanks to its semi-saline waters rich in minerals. Above it all, the winter sky becomes what the locals call the “donkey’s belly”: a solid, oppressive gray ceiling that seems to press down on the land itself.

By contrast, spring and autumn are gentler seasons, marked by gradual warming or cooling, while summer brings both beauty and intense heat to Rowan’s valleys.

Fauna and Flora

Rowan possesses a remarkably diverse ecosystem, much of it unique to the duchy. Among its most emblematic species are the short-haired dwarf bison, domesticated descendants of the great bison that once roamed the Tir Tochair Mountains; the Rowani duiker, bred from the herds that migrated northward when Barsa began to desertify; and the iconic Rowani quail (*Colinus rowanius*), a staple both locally and abroad. Another notable species is the Rowani boar, a unique third branch of the pig family stabilized only after centuries of alternating domestication and feralization.

Beyond animals raised for consumption, Rowan is also home to a variety of distinctive wildlife. Blackbirds and thrushes sing through its valleys, while the timber coyote roams its woodlands. Semi-domesticated muspélids are found both in the wild and in certain villages, often kept as companions or guardians. Two notable vulpine species exist: the river fox (*Vulpes aquatica*), a semi-aquatic predator, and their cousin, the farm fox (*Vulpes vulpes familiaris*), the local equivalent of the dog, since many dog breeds struggled with the climate. Freshwater habitats host pike, rainbow trout, endemic varieties of catfish, and on occasion salmon. Along riverbanks, clams and freshwater limpets are gathered. The skies are dotted with the delicate gracefinch (*Fringilla gratiosa*) and the endemic subfamily of chiroptera known as diurnal bats, while the hills are prowled by the diminutive hillcat (*Felis minimus*), also called the dwarf cat, which helps regulate populations of hill-dwelling mice, rats, rabbits, and various insects.

Rowan’s flora is no less distinctive. Mandrake in many varieties dominates both its economy and its symbolism, but it is joined by a wide variety of legumes, with as many regional cultivars as mandrake itself. Orchard trees yield numerous plum-related fruits—plumcots, pluots, apriums, and others. Endemic plants include the fervane, a distant cousin of rosemary known for its calming effects on mind and muscle, and the lowland

yew, which covers much of Rowan's evergreen forests alongside other members of the taxaceae family. Bright luciae roses are common in gardens and hedgerows, while the distinctive filicopsida filius—nicknamed "sunfern" or "child-fern"—thrives in shaded valleys, treasured for its striking golden fronds.

Economy

The economy of Rowan has long revolved around two principal sectors: primary production and services. This structure has endured since at least the days of the republic, when the duchy's geographical position, favorable climate, and the grand constructions of competing chiarns elevated Rowan into a rival of lands such as Toussaint in beauty and prestige.

During the Nilfgaardian imperial era, Rowan became a favored retreat for the nobility of Lower Alba and thus the imperial capital, as well as for visitors from other provinces and vassal states. Its rolling valleys, evergreen forests, and ornate chiarn-built estates made it a land of leisure and spectacle. The tourist season typically runs from spring to mid-autumn, since winters in Rowan are notably cold despite its southern latitude. Inns, bathhouses, and public gardens flourished during this period, giving rise to a strong local service sector that, unlike many other duchies, rivaled the agricultural output in importance.

In the primary sector, Rowan's chief export is mandrake, competing directly with the duchies of Vicovaro and Ymlac in both quality and volume of production. Mandrake from Rowan is often praised in alchemical texts for its potency and its flavor when processed into mandrake pomace, making it a prized ingredient across the empire and beyond. While the land is not fertile enough for wide-scale cultivation of crops such as olives or many fruit trees, it supports a variety of legumes and certain fruits. Among these are plumcots, pluots, apriums, nectaplums, peacotums, sweeties, tangelos, and limettas. These are consumed widely within the duchy, occasionally exported, and fetch high prices in Nilfgaardian markets.

Animal husbandry also plays a vital role. Rowan's rowani quail (*colinus rowanius)* is both a key export and a staple of the local diet, often served roasted at ducal banquets and even in the imperial court. Other breeds raised in the duchy include varieties of rowani duikers, short-haired dwarf bison, and, to a lesser degree, livestock such as the domesticated rowani boar, the already mentioned third branch of the pig family unique to the region, the product of centuries of alternating domestication and feralization, finally stabilized during the monarchical era.

Beyond these mainstays, Rowan also sustains minor industries. In the republican era, its prosperity relied less on production and more on its role as a commercial crossroads, thriving on tariffs levied upon foreign merchants who passed through its territory. This legacy of trade persists: guilds of carriers, moneylenders, and mandrake exporters—often

backed by the diminished yet still wealthy chiarns—continue to exert influence over the ducal senate, maintaining Rowan's reputation as a land where commerce and politics have always been inseparably intertwined.

Government

Rowan has undergone four major political transformations across its history: absolute monarchy, merchant republic, special administrative unit under the Nilfgaardian republic, and finally duchy under the Nilfgaardian Empire.

Rowan began as a compact absolute monarchy, where the king ruled with near-total authority. Its small territory allowed centralized control of land, taxes, and law. However, the monarchy's heavy taxation and extravagant expenditures alienated the merchant class, who provided much of the realm's wealth.

In time, the merchants—wealthy landowners known as chiarns (*Rowani: lord*)—rose to prominence. Purchasing ever greater estates, they transitioned from economic to political dominance. Eventually, they abolished the monarchy and established a merchant republic, governed by the Council of Chiarni. This transformation was explicitly inspired by the second form of Nilfgaardian government, when the southern power itself transitioned from monarchy to republic prior to its imperial transformation after the abolishing of the senate.

Once conquered by the republic of Nilfgaard through a tariff war, Rowan was reorganized as a special administrative unit called Swyg (*Middle Nilfgaardian: Bubble*) rather than a vassal state. While retaining certain local liberties, the former kingdom was gradually subject to Nilfgaardianization in its institutions, laws, and language. These privileges allowed Rowan to maintain a distinct character within the republic, but also planted seeds of suspicion in the capital.

With the rise of the Nilfgaardian Empire, Rowan's privileges were deemed excessive and potentially dangerous. The imperial court feared that the chiarns, if unchecked, might grow powerful enough again to extend their influence beyond Rowan and threaten the stability of the young empire. Thus Rowan's status was reduced: its special rights abolished, its administrative autonomy revoked, and its government reshaped into a duchy.

Unlike Toussaint's extremely lighter vassal model, Rowan's dukes were appointed directly from the capital and wielded authority on behalf of the emperor. The chiarns, once rulers in their own right, were relegated to wealthy landowners and advisers in a ducal senate—a consultative body summoned at the duke's discretion, with little true power beyond some minor economic questions.

Religion

The conversion of Rowan to the worship of the Great Sun was unusually smooth after its incorporation into Nilfgaardian territory. This was largely due to its pre-conquest faith: a monotheistic religion centered on the veneration of a solar deity known as Mithrea. Scholars suggest that this cult arose from the profound influence of the sun on Rowan's climate, with its scorching summers and frigid winters.

When imperial missionaries arrived with the faith of the Great Sun, many Rowani perceived little contradiction between the two. To them, the Ard Feainn seemed simply a more exalted and powerful manifestation of Mithrea, and so the transition was embraced with minimal resistance.

Yet traces of the old solar cult endured. Certain Rowani rites tied to the cycles of light and shadow were reinterpreted within Nilfgaardian orthodoxy: the midsummer festival of Solrathrea (Rowani: *Ascension of Mithrea*) became a sanctioned feast of the Great Sun, while the late winter to early spring vigil of Dysgrathrea (Rowani: *The Falling of Mithrea*)—when fires were kept alight until dawn to "guide Mithrea's return from the underworld"—was reframed as an act of devotion to the eternal radiance of the Ard Feainn.

Coat of Arms

The original coat of arms of Rowan featured a shield edged in gold, symbolizing the wealth brought from abroad by its principal export. Its field was pale blue, bearing at its center the image of a mandrake plant.

After Rowan's incorporation into the Nilfgaardian republic, the design was largely preserved but altered to reflect its new status. The shield was divided: one half retained the pale blue field with the mandrake emblem, while the other displayed half of the Nilfgaardian sun upon a black background.

Culture

Despite centuries of Nilfgaardianization, much of Rowan's social culture endured—preserved in part because it proved highly attractive to visitors and tourists. Traits such as punctuality, formal yet genuine politeness, patience, and calm remained hallmarks of Rowanite society. To travelers from the imperial capital, Rowan felt like home, but without the rigid austerity that so often characterized Lower Alba. Compared to Toussaint's flamboyant extravagance or Vicovaro's reserved yet overtly sociable manners, Rowan offered a dignified balance that was at once orderly and welcoming. This reputation gave rise to the expression "*to walk Rowan's pace*", a Nilfgaardian idiom describing someone who handles affairs calmly, without haste or waste, yet without neglecting precision.

Other aspects of culture, however, were profoundly reshaped under Nilfgaardian influence. Religion, as noted earlier, was absorbed almost entirely into the cult of the Great Sun, leaving only faint echoes of the older faith of Mithrea. Clothing, too, followed

imperial patterns but adapted to local conditions: in Rowan, white garments predominated during spring and summer, when the heat made lighter colors more practical, while black clothing became more common in the colder months, when its warmth was welcome.

People

Rowan is a small duchy, home to a population of roughly one million. Most of its inhabitants live in villages rather than cities, with settlements especially concentrated along the borders—reflecting the duchy's strong focus on tourism as a central part of its economy.

Even after centuries of Nilfgaardianization, the Rowanites retain a distinctive appearance. Their complexion tends toward a soft olive tone, complemented by very light brown hair that often shades into ash-blond or muted wheat-blond. Their stature closely matches that of the Lower Albanese average—approximately 1.75 m for men and 1.55 m for women.

Most striking are their eyes: characteristically deep black, the result of a high concentration of melanin developed to cope with the intense light of Rowan's hot summers. Nilfgaardian settlement introduced greater variety over time, however. Black and darker brown hair became more common, and rare eye colors drawn from the faint elven ancestry—oceanic blues, vivid pinks, fuchsias, and others—occasionally appear among Rowan's population.

Language

The official and most widely spoken language of Rowan today is Nilfgaardian, introduced during the duchy's incorporation—then still a special administrative unit—into the republic later turned empire. Over time, Nilfgaardian completely displaced Rowan's native tongue, Rowani, which now survives only in faint traces.

Rowani was once a distinct language, though shaped by early Nilfgaardian and, to a lesser extent, by Nordling Common—whose influence never extended farther south than Vicovaro. Despite these contacts, Rowani developed independently, forming a unique tongue with no true relation to either of its neighbors within the linguistic patchwork of the Old Continent.

By the imperial era, Rowani had largely disappeared. Its legacy endures mainly in toponyms and in idiomatic expressions that slipped into the local Nilfgaardian dialect, often betraying the Rowanite origin of its speakers.

The closest surviving descendant of Rowani is a stabilized creole that first emerged in late republican times and solidified during Rowan's early and mid-period as a special administrative unit. This creole used Nilfgaardian as its lexifier (supplying the majority of vocabulary) while preserving Rowani grammatical structures. Confined mostly to rural communities, it endured where the parent tongue did not, and remains today a linguistic reminder of Rowan's once-distinct identity.

Example of Rowani Names

Unlike the original Nilfgaardian names of the Lower Alba—characterized by their harsher, more guttural phonetics—Rowani names retained a markedly different profile, even after Nilfgaardization.

Though difficult to pronounce for outsiders like most names of the Empire, the difficulty in Rowan stems from different reasons: the survival of linguistic traces from the now-extinct Rowani tongue. These traces are visible in the persistence of graphemes absent in standard Nilfgaardian orthography, such as ñ, ń, æ, among others.

Thus, while Nilfgaardian names from the core and other provinces reflect their own phonetic traditions, Rowan's retain subtle echoes of their pre-conquest language.

Examples:

Rowani Male Given Names

Aè, Abner, Adlam, Aedan, Aelyn, Æld, Ældc, Ældco, Ældrin, Ælfgar, Ælfwine, Ælfræd, Æric, Æsc, Æthric, Alfóńss, Agostin, Alistryn, Alden, Alured, Alvano, Anzolo, Apolinare, Askell, Austo, Austonyo, Auryc, Axaria, Bada, Bènicio, Belin, Benasuto, Bembo, Bernandin, Biasio, Bòrran, Bortolo, Bourne, Brannoc, Brysso, Cærdan, Càrnell, Chalse, Chryss, Chrysso, Clark, Clarko, Conchor, Conyll, Cristòf, Cristòfoło, Cynefrith, Cynefroto, Cyneric, Dàryn, Davy, Davyno, Deorwine, Doncan, Doncaino, Drane, Draneo, Dudda, Duddio, Dòmin, Dòric, Eadgar, Èfrem, Éfremo, Éfess, Éfessy, Èlfrid, Èmeric, Ènzo, Eddag, Edagg, Edagarseo, Edańń, Elsey, Elseyo, Ferghus, Fingall, Fiske, Freydo, Fùnll, Fynll, Fynlo, Fynnric, Fàbyo, Fàvvyo, Gàyldo, Galfryd, Gàrryc, Garcyclas, Garcyclaso, Gàrvan, Gennaro, Gibbono, Gilaspick, Gilaso, Gilcomo, Gilleoin, Gillkom, Gilno, Glenno, Gorree, Hòldar, Herbett, Herbetto, Hrólfar, Inry, Inrro, Ílvaro, Johonk, Jole, Joll, Jool, Juxepe, Juxopp, Jàsten, Jòryc, Kellagh, Keranno, Kerran, Kèrryn, Kàedmon, Laurosy, Laurys, Lauerinno, Laus, Lauso, Láxaro, Lemetor, Lùcenn, Lùcian, Lilvano, Lilvaniardo, Loyso, Læric, Lunardo, Mafeo, Màrsilo, Marchino, Marchyn, Màrric, Myke, Mykeo, Nèstor, Nicołò, Nòric, Ñàric, Ñèldan, Ñòstan, Ñostimmo, Ñostimm, Ńaek, Ńaeko, Ńavor, Ńidric, Òrran, Òrric, Pàccio, Pàga, Pàolin, Pyt, Quènnar, Quirino, Riann, Rizardo, Rànulf, Ròdran, Ròdris, Rýgar, Sàvio, Sèrvio, Sttewy, Tata, Tatœ, Tàrren, Tòrben, Týrno, Vènicio, Vèldric, Vortrer, Vortrero, Vortroro, Wàllin, Wemba, Wérric, Xèrran, Yàvor, Zàrcio, Zanne, Zanni, Zanobi, Zen, Zennaro, Zèndal, Zorze, Zorzi, Zòrven, Zóric, Zuane.

Rowani Female Given Names

Aelid, Affric, Aimil, Ally, Austa, Austana, Aùrelia, Ælis, Ælira, Ænwyn, Bènysa, Bolatanada, Brìañńa, Brynja, Càelia, Càelys, Calyvorr, Cheyssa, Chryss, Chryssa, Creena, Crońma, Dàelynn, Dèlyra, Edyt, Edyta, Eehbba, Ènara, Èrisca, Èvana, Fàlia, Fàynis, Freyda, Freysa, Gàlisse, Gìllara, Glennie, Grayse, Gwynneth, Hanymaf, Hanymaw, Hańa, Haysa, Hèlisse, Hèlvyn, Imna, Innes, Ílaria, Ísera, Jàenys, Jàlynn, Jinnag, Johonka, Kàrys, Kèlyra, Lasa, Lausa, Lilvani, Lìssan, Lìvia, Llydæ, Llywèn, Loys, Màesra, Maiyrńa, Manx, Mańxca, Meg, Melitina, Mèlyra, Mèlyss, Mycha, Myka, Mylay, Nàella, Nàelle, Nàelle,

Nayha, Ñalys, Ñayc, Ñeg, Ñeira, Ñìssa, Ńadra, Ńayca, Ńessa, Ńessae, Ńevira, Nyehle, Òrelle, Òrryne, Pàelith, Pàtrisse, Qùenna, Qùinna, Riannet, Shananna, Rìanna, Rìsal, Sàelith, Sàelys, Sttewa, Sylvene, Tàenya, Tàllia, Tòvela, Vànessa, Vènisse, Wènys, Wìnya, Xevela, Xèlynn, Xèlyra, Yssoldy, Yssoltta, Zàelith, Zàenna.

Rowani Unisex Given Names

Aùstenn, Austan, Aúst, Æron, Æsric, Brýnn, Byldecat, Càel, Clev, Cleve, Damádd, Daddádd, Dòran, Èlyss, Fàero, Fáshh, Gàel, Gwèn, Hańń, Haññi, Hañu, Haym, Hays, Hòryn, IIssáca, Iaxen, Íven, Jàel, Jaxx, Johonke, Keće, Keńt, Kèlis, Lièvńe, Lòryń, Màel, Manax, Melat, Melitin, Myk, Myr, Ñæxœm, Ñorric, Ńat, Ńaev, Ńañ, Ńess, Ontt, Ortty, Òren, Pàvel, Pyster, Pyyt, Qua, Quag, Quæg, Qùen, Ràys, Royn, Sòren, Támńt, Tayl, Tàel, Tèryn, Vàel, Vortreert, Wýnn, Waýńñae, Xańu, Xàrri, Xevel, Yàric, Yáńń, Zèn, Zeńý.

Surnames

Rowani surnames were originally formed by combining a reduced form of the father's, tutor's, or family's name with the profession, joined by the connector *dysa* ("who is").

Example: *Bada Zordysaleigh = Bada, son of Zorze, who is a leighis (medic)*.

In the Nilfgaardian era, surnames shifted to follow the imperial standard, using **var** (family of) or **aep** (son/daughter of).

Example of Rowani Nilfgaardian Names

var Ælfenzo, var Æmbrano, var Albizo, var Barbo, var Bàrzi, var Biliyin, var Bòrtis, var Bragadin, var Brýndis, var Càenric, var Càellini, var Càpellan, var Ceterra, var Cibei, var Còrado, var Dàlenzo, var Dòlivar, var Dòrian, var Èlric, var Èstrin, var Fàrcino, var Fòrrenzi, var Gàrdano, var Gàrelli, var Ghisolfi, var Gwìndal, var Hòlviri, var Hòrcado, var Ílario, var Íssaro, var Iyyeso, var Jènnari, var Jòvanni, var Kàrval, var Kàrvalo, var Lomellini, var Llyssar, var Lòrenti, var Maca, var Màscari, var Mèdrano, var Musuniu, var Ñarvallo, var Ñèdrano, var Ñòrvali, var Ńelcor, var Ńevanno, var Ńolcari, var Òstaro, var Òstini, var Pàlemmo, var Pàrenzi, var Qùellini, var Qùirini, var Recepo, var Ròscado, var Ròscari, var Sàlvian, var Sàvelli, var Soranza, var Tàzzini, var Tòrcano, var Vendramin, var Venier, var Vènallo, var Vènaro, var Wèscari, var Wèssari, var Xàvieri, var Xòrvano, var Yàlleri, var Yàrdano, var Zènric, var Zòrvano.

Non-Humans

As noted previously, Rowan was never home to non-humans prior to their arrival on the Old Continent. This absence shaped the Rowanite mindset: non-humans—at least those whose physiology most closely resembled that of humans—were regarded simply as "*foreigners of a very different aspect*." As a result, discrimination within the duchy has been minimal compared to other Nilfgaardian territories or the Northern Realms.

The only non-human minority of notable presence in Rowan are the gnomes, owing to the duchy's proximity to the Tir Tochair Mountains. Over time, many gnomes who once descended merely to trade chose to settle permanently, integrating into Rowanite society. Interestingly, their most common occupations diverge from the usual stereotype of gnomes as smiths or inventors. In Rowan, they are more often found as overseers of agricultural estates, coordinators of field labor, or workers in the bathhouses that form part of the duchy's thriving service sector.

Alongside the gnomes who form Rowan's only permanent non-human minority, another group of non-humans frequently appeared in the duchy: witchers. Though not residents in the strict sense, witchers were called upon whenever monsters threatened the countryside. Rowan's hilly terrain, deep forests, and river valleys provided ample lairs for monsters, making the services of these itinerant hunters essential.

Most often, witchers of the Fox School and, more rarely, Viper School were encountered in Rowan, owing to the southern location of their strongholds. Their presence was particularly notable during the period when witchers were barred from entering Nilfgaard's imperial cities. Rowan, being a land of villages rather than great urban centers, became one of the few places in the empire where witchers could still find both contracts and acceptance.

Local chronicles occasionally mention them with wary respect, describing them as "*foreign blades against foreign beasts*." While never numerous for obvious reasons, their presence left enough of an impression that some rural traditions still feature half-forgotten tales of grim strangers with cat-like eyes who appeared, slew a monster, and departed without a trace.

Monsters

Like the rest of the world, Rowan became host to many creatures that entered the world after the First and Second Conjunctions. Its valleys, forests, and waterways provided ample ground for monsters to thrive, some unique to the region and others known across the Old Continent.

Among the most distinctive Rowanite monsters were:

- Glasthins: Massive monsters distantly related to aurochs, known for their thick hides and aggressive charges.
- Gefos: Monsters resembling giant mongooses, large as horses, feared for their speed and ferocity.
- Bugganes: A brutish type of ogre, even more savage and uncontrollable than their common kin.
- Arkasònes: hulking beasts the size of two horses, with spiny, hedgehog-like quills that made them dangerous to both witchers and livestock.
- Adhenes: winged predators often claimed by witchers to be distantly related to harpies, though their precise origins remain debated.

- Cabbylushes: A rare and deadly subspecies of kelpie, also called the *lunar kelpie*, famed for its vicious nature and its predatory hunts under moonlight.

Therianthropy also manifests in Rowan, but in forms less common elsewhere. Instead of the more widespread lycanthropy or ursotropy, Rowanites most often suffer from panthertropy and kaprostropy.

Specters are widespread, especially the dreaded hillwraiths—unisex apparitions said to haunt the valleys and slopes of the duchy. Rowani archespores also appear occasionally, noted for their larger size and greener hue compared to their common kin, an adaptation that allows them to blend seamlessly into the region's landscape.

In addition to these, Rowan also harbored many of the more widespread monsters common throughout the Old Continent—such as drowners, and nekkers in their distinctive "Royal" Rowanite variant.

The frequency and variety of such monsters ensured a steady demand for witchers throughout the duchy, particularly in its rural hinterlands where peasants and merchants often fell prey to the monsters lurking just beyond the safety of their villages.

Trivia

- Most Rowani names are either invented or derived from Anglo-Saxon, Venetian, or Manx roots, later passed through a "Nilfgaardized" filter.
- Rowan's history is loosely inspired by the Renaissance republics of Italy, particularly in the period of the Chiarni Republic.
- Mithrea, the pre-conquest solar deity of Rowan, is a deliberate reference to Mithra, the Persian god later adopted by the Romans, whose cult spread as far as Britannia.
- The Rowani language is heavily inspired by Manx, a Celtic tongue of the British Isles, serving as a model for its structure and phonetics.
- When the bard Dandelion (Jaskier) told Geralt of Rivia that there was still work for a witcher in the south, one of the lands he alluded to—without naming it outright—was Rowan.